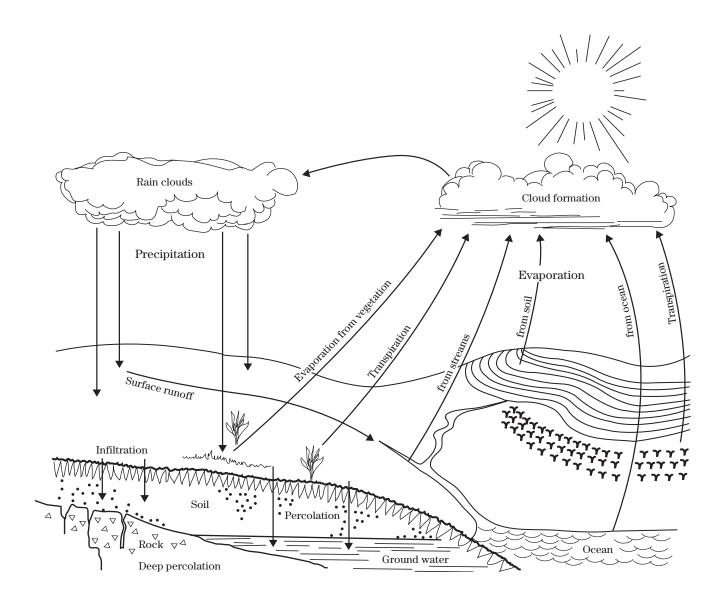
United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Part 630 Hydrology National Engineering Handbook

Chapter 16 Hydrographs



Chapter 16	Hydrographs	Part 630 National Engineering Handbook

Draft March 2003

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Chapter 16 Hydrographs

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630.1600 Introduction

Hydrographs or some elements of them, such as peak rates, are used in the planning and design of water control structures. They are also used to show the hydrologic effects of existing or proposed watershed projects and land use changes.

630.1601 Development of hydrograph relations

Runoff occurring on uplands flows downstream in various patterns. These patterns of flow are affected by many factors including

- · Spatial and temporal distribution of rainfall
- · Rate of snowmelt
- Hydraulics of streams
- Watershed and channel storage
- · Geology and soil characteristics
- Watershed surface and cover conditions

The graph of flow (rate versus time) at a stream section is the hydrograph, of which no two are exactly alike. A satisfactory mathematical analysis of flood hydrographs is not available; however, empirical relations have been developed. They started with the rational method in the 19th century, progressing to the unit hydrograph in the 1930's, and then to more recent use of dimensionless or index hydrographs. The empirical relations are simple elements from which a hydrograph may be made as complex as needed.

Present-day difficulties with hydrograph development lie in the precise estimation of runoff from rainfall (NEH 630, chapter 10) and determination of paths of flow (NEH 630, chapter 15).

(a) Types of hydrographs

This classification of hydrographs is a partial list, suitable for use in watershed work.

- **Natural hydrograph**—Obtained directly from the flow records of a gaged stream.
- **Synthetic hydrograph**—Obtained by using watershed parameters and storm characteristics to simulate a natural hydrograph.
- Unit hydrograph—A natural or synthetic hydrograph for 1 inch of direct runoff. The runoff occurs uniformly over the watershed in a specified time.
- **Dimensionless unit hydrograph**—Made to represent many unit hydrographs by using the time to peak and the peak rates as basic units and plotting the hydrographs in ratios of these units. Also called index hydrograph.

630.1602 Unit hydrograph

In 1932, L.K. Sherman (Sherman 1940) advanced the theory of the unit hydrograph, or unit graph. The unit hydrograph procedure assumes that discharge at any time is proportional to the volume of runoff and that time factors affecting hydrograph shape are constant.

Field data and laboratory tests have shown that the assumption of a linear relationship among watershed components is not strictly true. The nonlinear relationships have not been investigated sufficiently to ascertain their effects on a synthetic hydrograph. Until more information is available, the procedures of this chapter will be based on the unit hydrograph theory.

The fundamental principles of invariance and superposition make the unit graph an extremely flexible tool for developing synthetic hydrographs. These principles are

- The hydrograph of surface runoff from a watershed resulting from a given pattern of rainfall is invariable (principle of invariance).
- The hydrograph resulting from a given pattern of rainfall excess can be built up by superimposing the unit hydrographs because of the separate amounts of rainfall excess occurring in each unit period. This includes the principle of proportionality by which the ordinates of the hydrograph are proportional to the volume of rainfall excess (principle of superposition).

The unit time or *unit hydrograph duration* is the optimum duration for occurrence of precipitation excess. This unit time is approximately 20 percent of the time interval between the beginning of runoff from a short high-intensity storm and the peak discharge of the corresponding runoff.

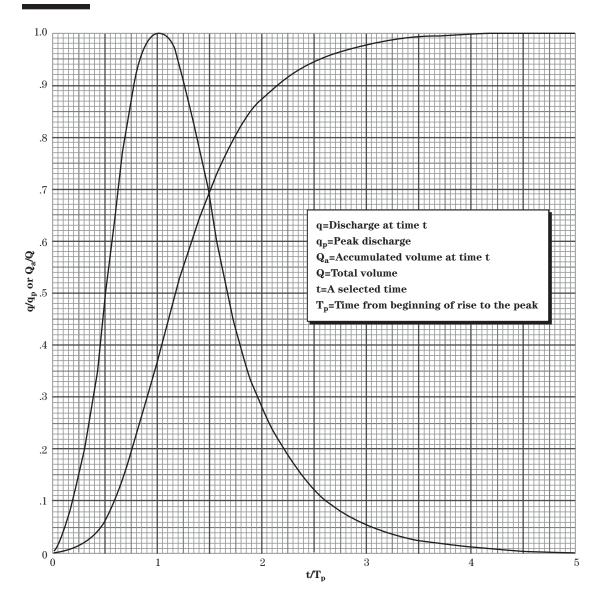
The *storm duration* is the actual duration of the precipitation excess. The duration varies with actual storms. The dimensionless unit hydrograph used by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was developed by Victor Mockus (fig. 16–1). It was derived from many natural unit hydrographs from watersheds varying widely in size and geographical locations. This dimensionless curvilinear hydrograph,

also shown in table 16–1, has its ordinate values expressed in a dimensionless ratio q/q_p or Q_a/Q and its abscissa values as t/T_p . This unit hydrograph has a point of inflection approximately 1.7 times the time-to-peak (T_p) and the time-to-peak 0.2 of the time-of-base (T_b) .

Table 16–1 Ratios for dimensionless unit hydrograph and mass curve

Time ratios (t/T _p)	Discharge ratios $(q\!/q_p)$	Mass curve ratios (Q_{a}/Q)
0	.000	.000
.1	.030	.001
.2	.100	.006
.3	.190	.017
.4	.310	.035
.5	.470	.065
.6	.660	.107
.7	.820	.163
.8	.930	.228
.9	.990	.300
1.0	1.000	.375
1.1	.990	.450
1.2	.930	.522
1.3	.860	.589
1.4	.780	.650
1.5	.680	.705
1.6	.560	.751
1.7	.460	.790
1.8	.390	.822
1.9	.330	.849
2.0	.280	.871
2.2	.207	.908
2.4	.147	.934
2.6	.107	.953
2.8	.077	.967
3.0	.055	.977
3.2	.040	.984
3.4	.029	.989
3.6	.021	.993
3.8	.015	.995
4.0	.011	.997
4.5	.005	.999
5.0	.000	1.000

 $\textbf{Figure 16-1} \quad \text{Dimensionless unit hydrograph and mass curve}$



630.1603 Application of unit hydrograph

The unit hydrograph can be constructed for any location on a regularly shaped watershed, once the values of q_n and T_n are defined (fig. 16–2, areas A and B).

Area C in figure 16–2 is an irregularly shaped watershed having two regularly shaped areas (C2 and C1) with a big difference in their time of concentration. This watershed requires the development of two unit hydrographs that may be added together forming one irregularly shaped unit hydrograph. This irregularly shaped unit hydrograph may be used to develop a flood hydrograph in the same way as the unit hydrograph developed from the dimensionless form (fig. 16–1) is used to develop the flood hydrograph. See example 16–1 for area shown in figure 16–2. Also, each

of the two unit hydrographs developed for areas C2 and C1 in figure 16–2 may be used to develop a flood hydrograph for its respective C2 and C1 area. The flood hydrographs from each area are then combined to form the hydrograph at the outlet of area C.

Many variables are integrated into the shape of a unit hydrograph. Since a dimensionless unit hydrograph is used and the only parameters readily available from field data are drainage area and time of concentration, consideration should be given to dividing the watershed into hydrologic units of uniformly shaped areas. These divisions, if at all possible, should be no greater than 20 square miles in area and should have a homogeneous drainage pattern.

Storm duration is the actual time duration of precipitation excess. This time duration varies with actual storms and should not be confused with the unit time or unit hydrograph duration.

Figure 16–2 Effect of watershed shape on the peaks of unit hydrographs D.A.=4.6 $T_c=2.3$ $\Delta D=0.3$ 1,500 $q_{p} = 1455$ 1,000 $T_c=6.0$ $\Delta D=0.8$ q, ft $^{3/s}$ Unit hydrograph from Area A $q_{p} = 557$ 500 500 Unit hydrograph from Area B $q, ft^3/s$ zero at 20 hours 4 5 Time hours 4 5 Time hours 3 1,000 г Area C2 Area C1 D.A.=2.0 $T_c=1.5$ $\Delta D=0.2$ D.A.=2.6 T_c=6.0 Unit hydrograph from area C2 $\Delta D = 0.8$ Unit hydrograph from area C1 q_{p} =315 $q_{p} = 988$ 10 15 20 Time hours 1,000 Combined unit hydrograph areas $\mathrm{C}1$ and $\mathrm{C}2$ 20 10 15 Time hours

Example 16–1 Composite flood hydrograph

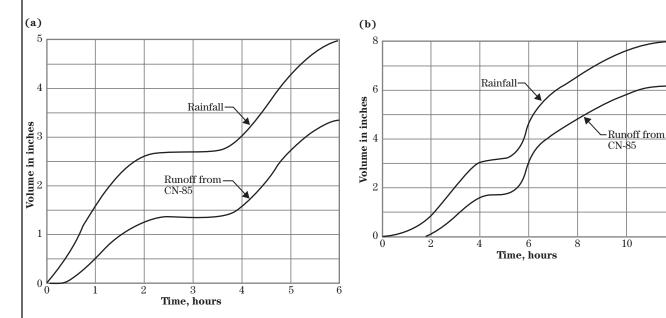
Given: Drainage area...... 4.6 square miles

Time of concentration 2.3 hours

 $\textbf{Problem:} \qquad \text{Develop a composite flood hydrograph using the runoff produced by the rainfall taken from a}$

recording rain gage (fig. 16–3a) on watershed (area A) shown in figure 16–2.

Figure 16–3 Accumulated rainfall and runoff for CN 85 taken from a recording rain gage



Solution:

Step 1 Develop and plot unit hydrograph.

Using equation 16–12 in appendix A, compute ĐD:

$$T_{c} + \Delta D = 1.7 \left(\frac{\Delta D}{2} + .6 T_{c} \right)$$

.15\D = .02 T_c

$$\Delta D = .133 T_c$$

 $\Delta D = .133 \times 2.3 = .306$ use .30 hours

Example 16-1 Composite flood hydrograph—Continued

Using equation 16–7 from appendix A, compute T_n:

$$T_{p} = \frac{\Delta D}{2} + L$$

$$T_p = \frac{.30}{2} + (.6 \times 2.3) = 1.53 \text{ hours}$$

Using equation 16–6 from the appendix, compute q for volume of runoff equal to 1 inch:

$$q_{\rm p} = \frac{484 AQ}{T_{\rm p}}$$

$$q_p = \frac{484 \times 4.6 \times 1}{1.53} = 1,455 \text{ ft}^3 / \text{s}$$

The coordinates of the curvilinear unit hydrograph are shown in table 16–2, and the plotted hydrograph is figure 16–4.

- **Step 2** Tabulate the ordinates of the unit hydrograph from figure 16–4 in 0.3 hour increments (table 16–4a, column 2).
- Step 3 Check the volume under unit hydrograph by summing the ordinates (table 16–5a, column 2) and multiplying by ΔD .

$$9,898 \times 0.3 = 2,969 \text{ (ft}^3\text{/s)}\text{hr}$$

Compare this figure with computed volume under unit hydrograph:

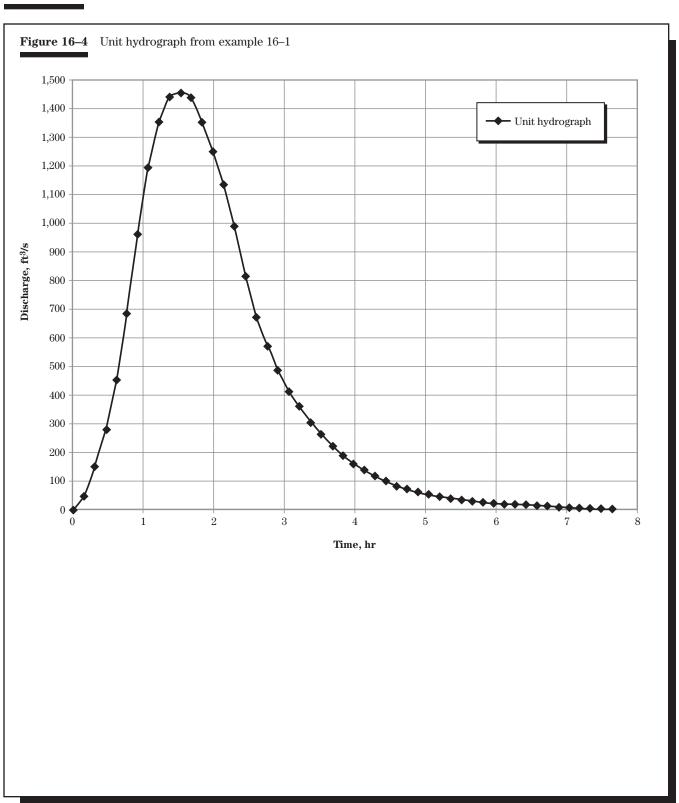
$$645.33 \times 4.6 = 2,968 \text{ (ft}^3\text{/s)}\text{hr}$$

If these fail to check, reread the coordinates from figure 16–4 and adjust if necessary until a reasonable balance in volume is attained.

Example 16-1 Composite flood hydrograph—Continued

Time ratios (table 16–1) (t/T _p)	$\begin{array}{c} \text{Time} \\ (\text{col } 1 \times 1.53) \\ (\text{hr}) \end{array}$	Discharge ratios (table 16–1) (q/q_p)	Discharges $(col 3 \times 1,455)$ (ft^3/s)	Time ratios (table 16–1) (t/T _p)	Time (col 1 × 1.53) (hr)	Discharge ratios (table 16–1) (q/q_p)	Discharges (col $3 \times 1,455$ (ft ³ /s)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
0.000	0.000	0.0000	0.000	2.600	3.978	0.1070	155.685
0.100	0.153	0.0300	43.650	2.700	4.131	0.0920	133.860
0.200	0.306	0.1000	145.500	2.800	4.284	0.0770	112.035
0.300	0.459	0.1900	276.450	2.900	4.437	0.0660	96.030
0.400	0.612	0.3100	451.050	3.000	4.590	0.0550	80.025
0.500	0.765	0.4700	683.850	3.100	4.743	0.0475	69.113
0.600	0.918	0.6600	960.300	3.200	4.896	0.0400	58.200
0.700	1.071	0.8200	1193.100	3.300	5.049	0.0345	50.198
0.800	1.224	0.9300	1353.150	3.400	5.202	0.0290	42.195
0.900	1.377	0.9900	1440.450	3.500	5.355	0.0250	36.375
1.000	1.530	1.0000	1455.000	3.600	5.508	0.0210	30.555
1.100	1.683	0.9900	1440.450	3.700	5.661	0.0180	26.190
1.200	1.836	0.9300	1353.150	3.800	5.814	0.0150	21.825
1.300	1.989	0.8600	1251.300	3.900	5.967	0.0130	18.915
1.400	2.142	0.7800	1134.900	4.000	6.120	0.0110	16.005
1.500	2.295	0.6800	989.400	4.100	6.273	0.0098	14.259
1.600	2.448	0.5600	814.800	4.200	6.426	0.0086	12.513
1.700	2.601	0.4600	669.300	4.300	6.579	0.0074	10.767
1.800	2.754	0.3900	567.450	4.400	6.732	0.0062	9.021
1.900	2.907	0.3300	480.150	4.500	6.885	0.0050	7.275
2.000	3.060	0.2800	407.400	4.600	7.038	0.0040	5.820
2.100	3.213	0.2435	354.293	4.700	7.191	0.0030	4.365
2.200	3.366	0.2070	301.185	4.800	7.344	0.0020	2.910
2.300	3.519	0.1770	257.535	4.900	7.497	0.0010	1.455
2.400	3.672	0.1470	213.885	5.000	7.650	0.0000	0.000

Example 16–1 Composite flood hydrograph—Continued



Example 16-1 Composite flood hydrograph—Continued

- **Step 4** Tabulate the accumulated rainfall in .3-hour increments (table 16–3, column 2).
- **Step 5** Compute the accumulated runoff (table 16–3, column 3) using CN of 85 and moisture condition II.
- **Step 6** Tabulate the incremental runoff (table 16–3, column 4).
- **Step 7** Tabulate the incremental runoff in reverse order (table 16–3, column 5) or on a strip of paper having the same line spacing as the paper used in step 2, or both.
- **Step 8** Place the strip of paper between column 1 and column 2 of table 16–4(a) and slide down until the first increment of runoff (0.12) on the strip of paper is opposite the first discharge (140) on the unit hydrograph (column 2). Multiplying $0.12 \times 140 = 16.8$ (round to 17). Tabulate in column 3 opposite the arrow on the strip of paper.
- Step 9 Move the strip of paper down one line (table 16–4(b)) and compute $(0.12 \times 439) + (.27 \times 140) = 90.48$. Tabulate in column 3 opposite the arrow on the strip of paper. Continue moving the strip of paper containing the runoff down one line at a time and accumulatively multiply each runoff increment by the unit hydrograph discharge opposite the increment.

Table 16–3 Rainfall tabulated in 0.3 hour increments from plot of rain gage chart in figure 16–3a

Time (hr)	Accum. rainfall (in)	Accum. runoff ^{1/} (in)	Incremental runoff (in)	Reversed incremental runoff	Time (hr)	Accum. rainfall (in)	Accum. runoff ^{1/} (in)	Incremental runoff (in)	Reversed incremental runoff
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	0.0	0.00							
0.3	0.37	0.00	0.00	0.09	3.3	2.71	1.35	0.01	0.00
0.6	0.87	0.12	0.12	0.19	3.6	2.77	1.40	0.05	0.00
0.9	1.40	0.39	0.27	0.24	3.9	2.91	1.51	0.11	0.06
1.2	1.89	0.72	0.33	0.31	4.2	3.20	1.76	0.25	0.12
1.5	2.24	0.98	0.26	0.42	4.5	3.62	2.12	0.36	0.18
1.8	2.48	1.16	0.18	0.36	4.8	4.08	2.54	0.42	0.26
2.1	2.63	1.28	0.12	0.25	5.1	4.43	2.85	0.31	0.33
2.4	2.70	1.34	0.06	0.11	5.4	4.70	3.09	0.24	0.27
2.7	2.70	1.34	0.00	0.05	5.7	4.90	3.28	0.19	0.12
3.0	2.70	1.34	0.00	0.01	6.0	5.00	3.37	0.09	0.00

 $1\!/\,$ Runoff computed using CN 85 moisture condition II.

Example 16-1 Composite flood hydrograph—Continued

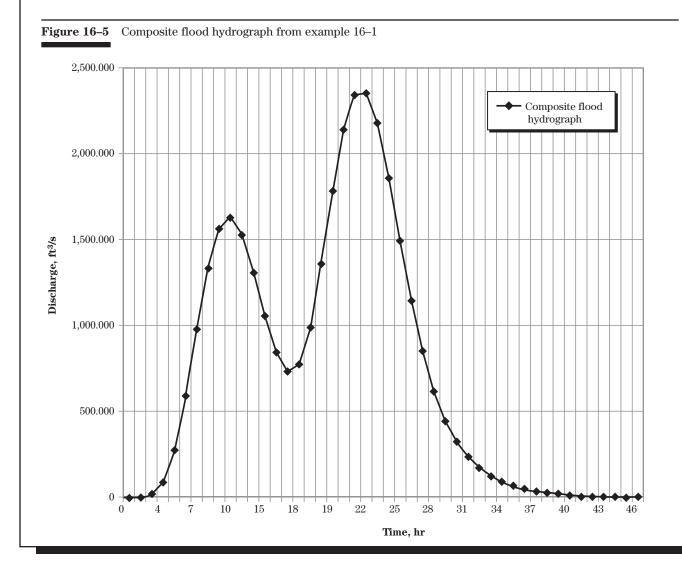
16-4(a)	16–4(b)	16–4(c)	16-4(d)		
Reversed incremental rumoff 0.09 0.19 0.24 0.31 0.42 0.36 0.25 0.11 0.05 0.01 0.00 0.00 0.00 0.00 0.0	3-hr inc 0.26 hyd. hyd. 0.00 0.33 0.00 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000	$ \begin{array}{cccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	$ \begin{array}{ c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c$		

Example 16-1 Composite flood hydrograph—Continued

Table 16–4(c) shows the position of the strip of paper containing the runoff when the peak discharge of the flood hydrograph (2,356 ft³/s) is reached. If only the peak discharge of the flood hydrograph is desired, it can be found by making only a few computations, placing the larger increments of runoff near the peak discharge of the unit hydrograph.

Table 16–4(d) shows the position of the strip of paper containing the runoff at the completion of the flood hydrograph. The complete flood hydrograph is shown in column 3. These discharges are plotted at their proper time sequence on figure 16–5, which is the complete flood hydrograph for example 16–1.

Step 10 Calculate the volume under the flood hydrograph by summing the ordinates (table 16–4(d), column 3) and multiplying by $D: 33,406 \times .3 = 10,021.8 \text{ ft}^3/\text{s-hours}$.



630.1604 Unit hydrograph development for a gaged watershed

The dimensionless unit hydrograph varies from watershed to watershed based on a number of factors. Some of these factors are size of watershed, geomorphic characteristics, geologic characteristics, watershed slope, watershed length, amount of storage, degree of channelization of the stream network, and degree of urbanization. The dimensionless unit hydrograph (DUH) used as an NRCS standard for many years has a peak rate factor of 484 and is described earlier in this chapter. This DUH was developed by Victor Mockus (1957) from analysis of small watersheds where the rainfall and streamflow were gaged. An alternative to the 484 DUH has been developed for the Delmarva region (Delaware, Maryland, Virginia peninsula) based on data from four gaged watersheds (Welle et al., 1980).

Many reports have been published concerning development of the DUH for gaged watersheds in various parts of the country including Maryland (McCuen, 1989), South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Michigan, North Dakota, Minnesota, and Texas. The DUH as well as time of concentration, runoff curve number, stream Manning n values and other key parameters may be calibrated to gage data. Calibration of a hydrologic model may be based on actual measurements for the watershed or studies of nearby gaged watersheds, such as regional regression equations. A regional study of the DUH for gaged watersheds may reveal insights into what DUH to use for an ungaged watershed located within the region.

Various engineering textbooks, such as Linsley, Kohler, Paulhus (1982), have procedures to develop a unit hydrograph from gaged rainfall and streamflow data. The method presented in this chapter is somewhat different. It is a practical method using the NRCS TR-20 computer program. The primary concept upon which the method is based is that if the DUH is to be used in TR-20 for analysis of hypothetical storms (such as design storms, 100-year storm, probable maximum

flood), the DUH should be developed by calibrating TR-20 for measured rainfall and streamflow data for the watershed. Furthermore, the TR-20 input data file should be organized in such a way as to represent the watershed stream network as determined by the project purpose and degree of detail. The DUH is used in TR-20 to develop the incremental runoff hydrograph for a short duration of rainfall excess that results from rainfall assumed to be at uniform intensity. The rainfall distribution for the storm is divided into several short duration increments each with assumed uniform rainfall intensity and uniform depth over a watershed (or subwatershed). This is consistent with the assumption of unit hydrograph theory of spatial and temporal uniformity.

The shape of the DUH determines the peak rate factor. The higher the peak rate factor the higher the peak discharge will be from the watershed. The 1972 version of chapter 16 stated: "This constant has been known to vary from about 600 in steep terrain to 300 in very flat, swampy country." Studies that are more recent have shown the peak rate factor has a much wider range: from below 100 to more than 600. The standard 484 DUH was not originally developed from an equation; however, the gamma equation fits the shape fairly well. The gamma equation may be used to develop a DUH with any desired peak rate factor. The gamma equation has the following form:

$$\frac{\mathbf{Q}}{\mathbf{Q}_{\mathbf{p}}} = \mathbf{e}^{\mathbf{m}} \left[\left(\frac{\mathbf{t}}{\mathbf{t}_{\mathbf{p}}} \right)^{\mathbf{m}} \right] \left[\mathbf{e}^{\left(-\mathbf{m} \left(\frac{\mathbf{t}}{\mathbf{t}_{\mathbf{p}}} \right) \right)} \right]$$

where:

 $\frac{Q}{Q_p}$ = ratio of discharge at a certain time to the peak discharge of the unit hydrograph (UH)

e = constant 2.7183

m = gamma equation shape factor

 $\frac{t}{t_p}$ = ratio of the time of DUH coordinate to time to peak of the DUH

Since the equation has only one parameter, \mathbf{m} , one value of \mathbf{m} produces a unique DUH, and thus one unique peak rate factor. The peak rate factor (PRF) is calculated from the DUH coordinates using the equation shown at the bottom of this page:

where:

645.33 = unit conversion factor (see equation 16–5, appendix 16A)

nondimensional time step = the nondimensional time interval of the DUH

The PRF is calculated after the DUH coordinates are calculated. This means that various values of **m** must be tried in the equation until a desired PRF is reached. Table 16–5 shows the relationship of **m** and PRF. The general steps to develop the DUH follow.

Step 1—Derive input to the TR-20 model, enter the data, and make preliminary simulations. If the stream gage is not at the watershed outlet, defining a subwatershed or end of reach at the location of the stream gage is recommended. The original TR-20 input file should be copied to create a separate file for each storm event to be analyzed. The object of this analysis is to model the storm event over the watershed and adjust parameters, such as runoff curve number, baseflow, time of concentration, and DUH, to provide the best match with the measured streamflow hydrograph at the gage.

Table 16–5 Relationship of m and PRF for DUH developed from a Gamma equation

m	PRF		
0.26	101		
1	238		
2	349		
3	433		
3.7	484		
4	504		
5	566		

Step 2—Examine rainfall and streamflow records to ensure there are periods of record where both rainfall and streamflow are measured. At the stream gage location, select several flood events to be analyzed representing a range of magnitudes and for which rainfall records are available. With respect to time interval of data, generally the smaller the time interval the better the results to be expected. At some point, the engineer needs to assess the quality of data being used, locations of gages (often a rain gage within the watershed boundary is not available), and whether the time interval of the data is satisfactory. For example, if the stream gage is a crest gage (only peak discharge is recorded) and the rain gage records daily precipitation, can a reasonable DUH be developed? Other commonly available data are hourly and 15 minute precipitation; daily, hourly, and peak streamflow; and breakpoint data (available for many Agricultural Research Service experimental watersheds).

Step 3—For storm events with both measured rainfall and streamflow, develop a cumulative rainfall distribution to be entered into the TR-20 data file. If the watershed is small enough or if rainfall data are limited, a single rain gage may be used to represent uniform rainfall over the watershed. If more than one rain gage is available, rainfall isohyets may be drawn over the watershed and rainfall varied for each subwatershed.

Step 4—Runoff volume may be determined for the streamflow hydrograph and is recommended to be the first parameter calibrated. Runoff volume is the volume of the hydrograph above the baseflow. Several baseflow separation methods are described in standard hydrology texts, but in many small watersheds, baseflow is relatively small and a constant baseflow can generally be assumed. The runoff curve number for the watershed (or its subwatersheds if so divided) may be adjusted such that the storm event rainfall produces the storm event runoff.

Step 5—If the hydrograph at the gage has significant baseflow, the value may be entered in the appropriate location in the TR-20 input file. Consideration should also be given to prorating the baseflow value (based on drainage area) at other locations along the stream network.

Step 6—Timing of the peak discharge at the gage is dependent primarily upon the time of concentration and stream cross section rating tables. The Manning n used for overland flow, concentrated flow, and channel flow is not known precisely. Using gage data may help in refining these estimates. If the times to peak of the measured and computed hydrographs are not similar, the timing factors of the watershed should be adjusted to bring the times to peak into closer agreement.

Step 7—After the runoff volume and timing have been adjusted, the DUH may be calibrated by entering a DUH in TR-20 with various peak rate factors. The object is to match the peak discharge and shape of the measured hydrograph as closely as possible.

Considerations to be made in selecting events to analyze should include single versus multiple peak hydrographs, long versus short duration rainfalls, event runoff curve number (high versus low), and large versus small flood events. Rainfall events separated by a relatively short time span may not allow the streamflow hydrograph to return to baseflow. Use of a complete hydrograph that begins and ends at baseflow is recommended.

Problems inevitably occur when working with rainfall and runoff data. Problems indicating that a particular event should not be included in the analysis may include

- a significant flood event with minor rainfall and vice versa,
- more runoff volume than rainfall, or
- timing of rainfall and runoff measurements may be out of synchronization (for example, the hydrograph may begin rising before there is any rainfall).

If more than one storm event is analyzed, there may be a wide range of event peak rate factors. The causes of these kinds of problems include

- poor data quality,
- nonuniform rainfall over the watershed,
- rainfall (magnitude and/or distribution) at the gage not representing rainfall over the watershed,
- partial area hydrology,
- runoff curve number procedure not representing the distribution of rainfall excess over time,
- frozen soil, snowmelt runoff, transmission loss, or physical changes in the watershed over time (urbanization, reservoir construction, channel modification), and
- the DUH may even be sensitive to the magnitude of the storm and resulting flood.

If there is a wide range of PRF's for the various storm events, the data and watershed characteristics should be investigated to determine the reason. Judgment needs to be exercised in determining what DUH best represents the watershed. Example 16–2 shows the procedure to determine the dimensionless unit hydrograph for a gaged watershed.

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Example 16–2 Determining the DUH for a gaged watershed

Watershed	and	storm	event	description:

The watershed selected for this example is Alligator Creek near Clearwater, Florida. Hourly discharge and rainfall data were provided by the United States Geological Survey. The watershed has a drainage area of 6.73 square miles. For simplicity, the watershed is treated as a single watershed and is not divided into subwatersheds. The date of the storm event being analyzed is February 2, 1996. The storm had a duration of 15 hours and a total rainfall of 3.69 inches. The peak discharge at the stream gage was 436 cubic feet per second.

Rainfall and runoff data:

Columns 1 to 3 in table 16-6 show the time series of measured rainfall and streamflow. The rainfall distribution for the storm event is plotted in figure 16-6. The baseflow of the hydrograph is 4.7 cubic feet per second. After subtracting the constant baseflow from the measured hydrograph, the runoff volume was computed to be 1.45 inches. The runoff curve number corresponding to 3.69 inches of rainfall and 1.45 inches of runoff is 75.2, which was used in TR-20 for the watershed runoff curve number.

Time of concentration:

The time to peak of the measured hydrograph is at 12 hours. Several trials of watershed time of concentration were made before arriving at the value of 8 hours. This resulted in the computed hydrograph having a time to peak of 12 hours.

Dimensionless Unit Hydrograph:

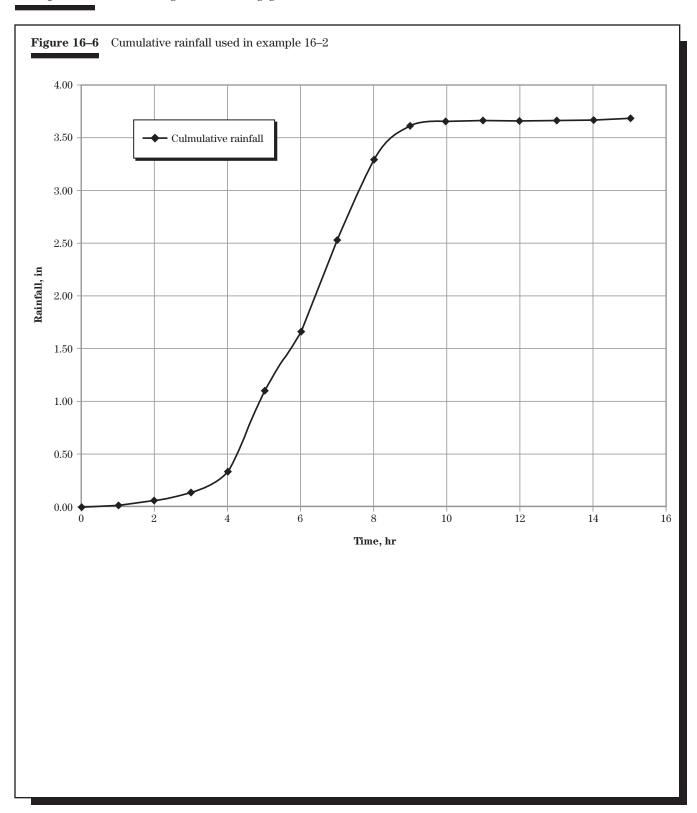
A DUH for any desired peak rate factor may be developed from the gamma equation described in this section. Appendix 16B has standard tables that have been developed for a DUH based on the gamma equation for peak rate factors ranging from 100 to 600 (at increments of 50). The PRF for the individual storm event was between 200 and 250. The final peak rate factor of 238 was selected (which gave a good fit of hydrograph shape and peak discharge). The DUH is listed in table 16–7 and plotted in figure 16–7. The computed hydrograph for this PRF is in column 4 of table 16–6. The comparison of the measured and computed

hydrographs is shown in figure 16–8.

Example 16–2 Determining the DUH for a gaged watershed—Continued

Time (hr)	Cumulative rainfall (in)	Measured runoff (ft ³ /s)	Computed runoff (ft ³ /s)	Time (hr)	Cumulative rainfall (in)	Measured runoff (ft ³ /s)	Computed runoff (ft ³ /s)
0	0.00	4.7	4.7	28		87.4	92.5
1	0.01	4.7	4.7	29		81.4	81
2	0.06	4.7	4.7	30		76.7	70.9
3	0.14	5.0	4.7	31		71.6	62
4	0.34	5.5	4.7	32		66.6	54.2
5	1.10	7.8	13.9	33		63.4	47.4
6	1.66	24.8	48.5	34		59.2	41.4
7	2.54	98.8	121.1	35		56.2	36.1
8	3.30	199.5	211.2	36		53.2	31.4
9	3.62	292.9	315.3	37		50.8	27.6
10	3.66	362.5	379.6	38		47.5	24.4
11	3.67	416.1	414.1	39		45.7	21.7
12	3.67	436.4	425.9	40		44.3	19.2
13	3.67	424.9	421.6	41		42.5	17.1
14	3.68	395.0	407.2	42		40.8	15.3
15	3.69	357.8	386.2	43		39.1	13.8
16		316.8	360.8	44		37.8	12.4
17		279.1	333	45		36.5	11.3
18		244.6	304.3	46		35.3	10.3
19		215.0	275.9	47		34.5	9.4
20		187.1	248.4	48		33.7	8.7
21		165.9	222.4	49		32.5	8.1
22		146.7	198.2	50		31.8	7.6
23		132.2	175.8	51		31.0	7.1
24		119.9	155.2	52		30.2	6.7
25		110.4	136.6	53		29.5	6.4
26		100.8	120	54		28.8	6.1
27		93.0	105.4	55		27.7	5.8

Example 16–2 Determining the DUH for a gaged watershed—Continued

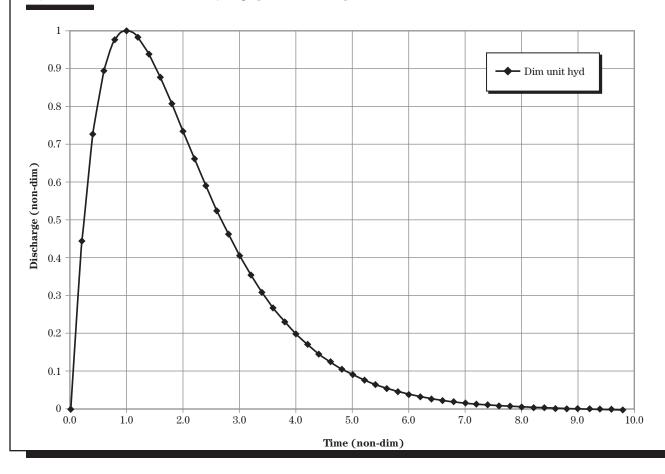


Example 16–2 Determining the DUH for a gaged watershed—Continued

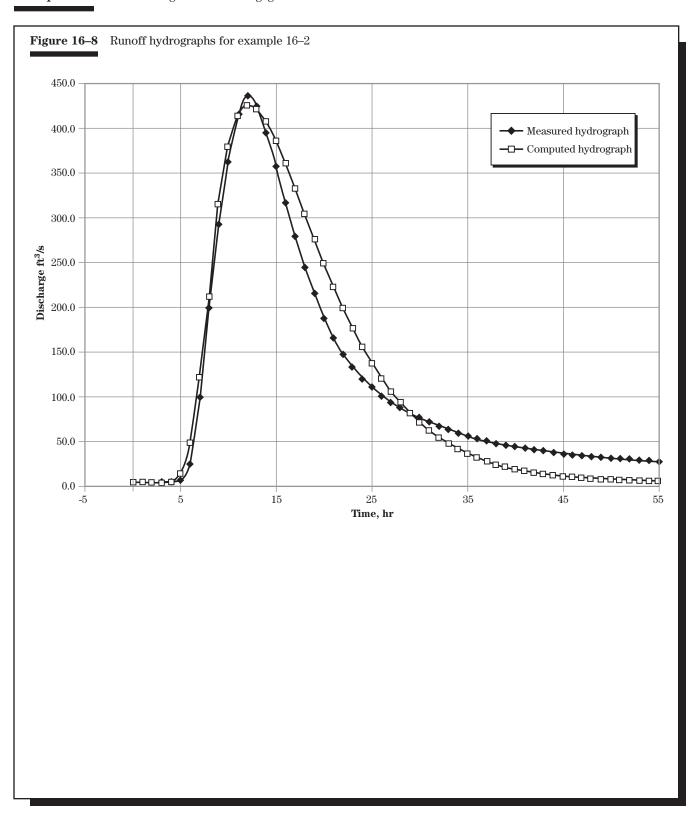
 $\textbf{Table 16-7} \quad \text{ Dimensionless unit hydrograph for Alligator Creek at Clearwater, Florida} \\$

Time non-dim	Discharge non-dim								
0.0	0	2.0	0.736	4.0	0.199	6.0	0.04	8.0	0.007
0.2	0.445	2.2	0.663	4.2	0.172	6.2	0.034	8.2	0.006
0.4	0.729	2.4	0.592	4.4	0.147	6.4	0.029	8.4	0.005
0.6	0.895	2.6	0.525	4.6	0.126	6.6	0.024	8.6	0.004
0.8	0.977	2.8	0.463	4.8	0.107	6.8	0.021	8.8	0.0036
1.0	1	3.0	0.406	5.0	0.092	7.0	0.017	9.0	0.003
1.2	0.983	3.2	0.355	5.2	0.078	7.2	0.015	9.2	0.0025
1.4	0.938	3.4	0.308	5.4	0.066	7.4	0.012	9.4	0.002
1.6	0.878	3.6	0.267	5.6	0.056	7.6	0.01	9.6	0.001
1.8	0.809	3.8	0.231	5.8	0.048	7.8	0.009	9.8	0
								PRF	238.37

Figure 16–7 Dimensionless unit hydrograph used in example 16–2



Example 16–2 Determining the DUH for a gaged watershed—Continued



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Example 16–2 Determining the DUH for a gaged watershed—Continued

Conclusion:

This procedure outlines the steps of developing the DUH by trial-and-error using TR-20. The comparison of the measured and computed hydrographs shows a good match of the rising hydrograph limb and the peak discharge and a less accurate fit of the falling limb. The measured hydrograph shows a slower recession at the tail of the hydrograph, which may represent delayed release of water from storage. Representing this in the DUH would require a more complex mathematical representation, such as a gamma equation for the majority of the DUH shape and an exponential recession function to represent the tail of the DUH. If another shape of DUH is desired, it may be accommodated in the steps described above.

Williams (James, Winsor, Williams, 1987) and Meadows (1991) developed computer programs that automate this process through optimization techniques. The only required data are rainfall distribution and magnitude, measured hydrograph, and watershed drainage area. The output from these programs includes the event runoff curve number, unit hydrograph, peak rate factor, plots, and statistical analysis. These programs treat the watershed as a single unit (division of watershed into subwatersheds is not simulated) assuming uniform rainfall and uniform runoff curve number. They have been used to study unit hydrographs at many watersheds throughout the country (Woodward, Merkel, Sheridan, 1995). If the watershed is divided into subwatersheds, the steps above are recommended to develop a trial-and-error solution. The more subwatersheds and reaches in the TR-20 input data the more complicated this process becomes. However, if the steps are followed, a hydrologic model calibrated in such a manner will make the best use of limited gage information at other locations within the watershed.

630.1605 References

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Appendix 16A

Elements of a Unit Hydrograph

The dimensionless curvilinear unit hydrograph (see fig. 16–1) has 37.5 percent of the total volume in the rising side, which is represented by one unit of time and one unit of discharge. This dimensionless unit hydrograph also can be represented by an equivalent triangular hydrograph having the same units of time and discharge, thus having the same percent of volume in the rising side of the triangle (fig. 16A–1). This allows the base of the triangle to be solved in relation to the time to peak using the geometry of triangles. Solving for the base length of the triangle, if one unit of time $T_{\rm p}$ equals .375 of volume:

$$T_b = \frac{1.00}{.375} = 2.67$$
 units of time

 $T_r = T_b - T_p = 1.67$ units of time or 1.67 T_p

These relationships are useful in developing the peak rate equation for use with the dimensionless unit hydrograph.

Peak rate equation

From figure 16–9 the total volume under the triangular unit hydrograph is:

$$Q = \frac{q_{p}T_{p}}{2} + \frac{q_{p}T_{r}}{2} = \frac{q_{p}}{2}(T_{p} + T_{r})$$
 [16-1]

With ${\bf Q}$ in inches and T in hours, solve for peak rate ${\bf q}_{\bf P}$ in inches per hour:

$$q_{p} = \frac{2Q}{T_{p} + T_{r}}$$
 [16–2]

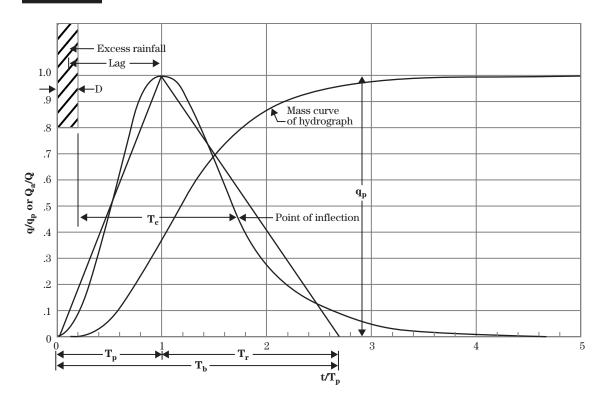
Let:

$$K = \frac{2}{1 + \frac{T_r}{T_p}}$$
 [16–3]

Therefore:

$$q_{p} = \frac{KQ}{T_{p}}$$
 [16–4]

Figure 16A-1 Dimensionless curvilinear unit hydrograph and equivalent triangular hydrograph



In making the conversion from inches per hour to cubic feet per second and putting the equation in terms ordinarily used, including drainage area A in square miles and time T in hours, equation 16–4 becomes the general equation:

$$q_{p} = \frac{645.33 \times K \times A \times Q}{T_{p}}$$
 [16-5]

where:

 q_p = peak discharge in cubic feet per second (ft 3 /s)

645.33 = conversion factor for the rate required to discharge 1 inch from 1 square mile in 1 hour

The relationship of the triangular unit hydrograph, $T_{\rm r}=1.67,$ gives K = 0.75. Then substituting into equation 16–5 gives:

$$q_{p} = \frac{484 \text{AQ}}{T_{p}}$$
 [16-6]

The peak rate factor for the triangular dimensionless unit hydrograph is 484. The curvilinear dimensionless unit hydrograph of table 16–1 has a peak rate factor of 483.4 due to rounding of the discharge ratios to either two or three decimal places. This discrepancy produces a negligible difference in the calculated peak discharges.

Any change in the dimensionless unit hydrograph reflecting a change in the percent of volume under the rising side would cause a corresponding change in the shape factor associated with the triangular hydrograph and, therefore, a change in the constant 484. This constant has been known to vary from about 600 in steep terrain to 300 in flat, swampy country. The hydrologist should concur in the use of a dimensionless unit hydrograph other than that shown in figure 16–9. If the dimensionless shape of the hydrograph needs to vary to perform a special job, the ratio of the percent of total volume in the rising side of the unit hydrograph to the rising side of a triangle is a useful tool in arriving at the peak rate factor.

Figure 16A-1 shows that:

$$T_{p} = \frac{\Delta D}{2} + L \qquad [16-7]$$

where:

 ΔD = duration of unit excess rainfall

L = watershed lag in hours

The lag of a watershed is defined in NEH 630, chapter 15 as the time from the center of mass of excess rainfall (ΔD) to the time to peak (T_p) of a unit hydrograph. From equation 16–6:

$$q_p = \frac{484AQ}{\frac{\Delta D}{2} + L}$$
 [16–8]

The average relationship of lag to time of concentration (T_c) is $L = 0.6 T_c$ (NEH 630, chapter 15).

Substituting in equation 16–8, the peak rate equation becomes:

$$q_{p} = \frac{484AQ}{\frac{\Delta D}{2} + 0.6T_{c}}$$
 [16–9]

The time of concentration is defined in two ways in chapter 15:

- The time for runoff to travel from the hydraulically most distant point in the watershed to one point in question.
- The time from the end of excess rainfall to the point of inflection of the unit hydrograph.

These two relationships are important because T_c is computed under the first definition and $\Delta D,$ the unit storm duration, is used to compute the time to peak (T_p) of the unit hydrograph. This in turn is applied to all of the points on the abscissa of the dimensionless unit hydrograph using the ratio t/T_p as shown in table $16{\text -}1.$

The dimensionless unit hydrograph shown in figure 16A–1 has a time to peak at one unit of time and point of inflection at approximately 1.7 units of time. Using the relationships Lag = 0.6 $T_{\rm c}$ and the point of inflection = 1.7 $T_{\rm p}, \Delta D$ will be .2 $T_{\rm p}$ A small variation in θD is permissible; however, it should be no greater than .25 $T_{\rm p}$. Example 16–3 illustrates the development of a composite flood hydrograph as shown in figure 16–6.

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Using the relationship shown on the dimensionless unit hydrograph in figure 16A–1, compute the relationship of ΔD to T_c :

$$T_c + \Delta D = 1.7T_p$$
 [16–10]

$$\frac{\Delta D}{2} + .6T_{c} = T_{p}$$
 [16–11]

Solving these two equations:

$$\begin{split} &T_{c} + \Delta D = 1.7 \bigg(\frac{\Delta D}{2} + .6 \ T_{c} \ \bigg) \\ &.15 \Delta D = .02 \ T_{c} \\ &\Delta D = .133 \ T_{c} \end{split} \tag{16-12}$$

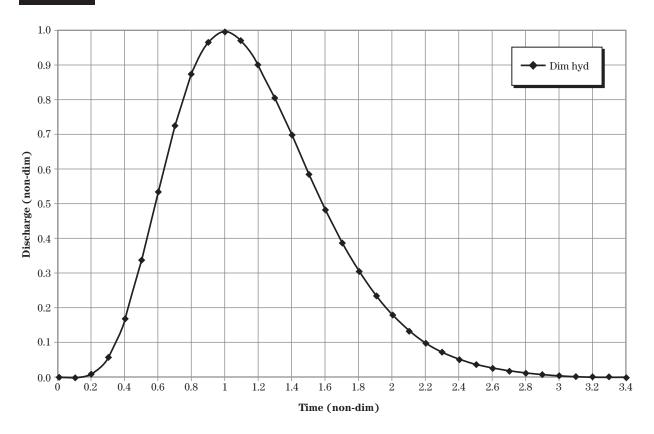
Appendix 16B

Dimensionless Unit Hydrographs with Peak Rate Factors from 100 to 600

This appendix has standard dimensionless unit hydrographs developed using the gamma equation. For each peak rate factor from 100 to 600, in increments of 50, a table has been prepared in the format for the NRCS TR-20 computer program (see tables 16B–1 through 16B–11). A plot of each dimensionless unit hydrograph is included as figures 16B–1 through 16B–11. Refer to section 630.1604 for information on the development and use of these standard tables.

Table 16B-1 Peak	rate factor = 600					
DIMENSIONLESS UN	IIT HYDROGRAPH	I:				
	0.0	0.0004	0.0108	0.0596	0.1703	
	0.3392	0.5378	0.7282	0.8785	0.9704	
	1.0	0.9741	0.9058	0.8101	0.7008	
	0.5891	0.4831	0.3875	0.3049	0.2358	
	0.1795	0.1348	0.0999	0.0732	0.0531	
	0.0381	0.0271	0.0191	0.0134	0.0093	
	0.0064	0.0044	0.003	0.002	0.0014	
	0.0009	0.0006	0.0004	0.0003	0.0002	
	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0		

Figure 16B-1 Dimensionless unit hydrograph — peak rate factor = 600



0.0354

0.0074

0.0014

0.0262

0.0054

0.001

0.0002

0.0193

0.0038

0.0007

0.0001

Table 16B-2 Peak rate factor = 550DIMENSIONLESS UNIT HYDROGRAPH: 0.0 0.0013 0.0218 0.0923 0.2242 0.4012 0.5922 0.7649 0.8964 0.975 1.0 0.9781 0.9198 0.837 0.7405 0.6396 0.2951 0.5408 0.449 0.3666 0.2344 0.184 0.1429 0.1099 0.0837

0.0005 0.0003 0.0002 0.0001 0.0001 0.0

0.0475

0.0103

0.002

Figure 16B–2 Dimensionless unit hydrograph — peak rate factor = 550

0.0633

0.0141

0.0027

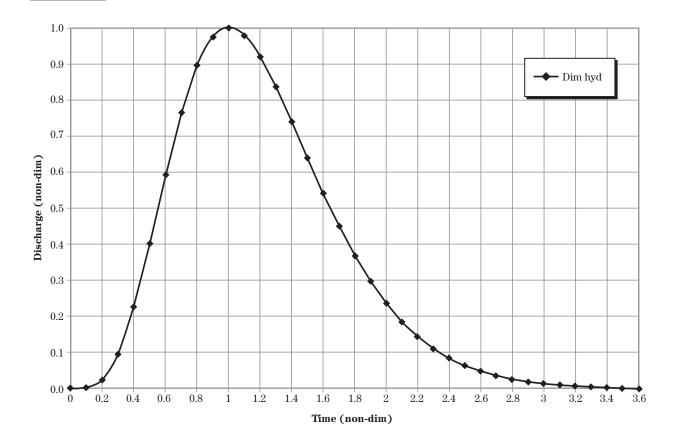


Table 16B-3 Peal	k rate factor = 500				
DIMENSIONLESS (JNIT HYDROGRAPI	Н:			
	0.0	0.004	0.0414	0.1376	0.2881
	0.4677	0.6466	0.8001	0.913	0.9791
	1.0	0.9817	0.9328	0.8623	0.7788
	0.6893	0.5996	0.5135	0.4338	0.3621
	0.2989	0.2444	0.198	0.1591	0.126
	0.1006	0.0792	0.062	0.0482	0.0374
	0.0288	0.0221	0.0169	0.0129	0.0098
	0.0074	0.0056	0.0042	0.0031	0.0023
	0.0017	0.0013	0.001	0.0007	0.0005
	0.0004	0.0003	0.0002	0.0002	0.0001
	0.0001	0.0001	0.0		

Figure 16B–3 Dimensionless unit hydrograph — peak rate factor = 500

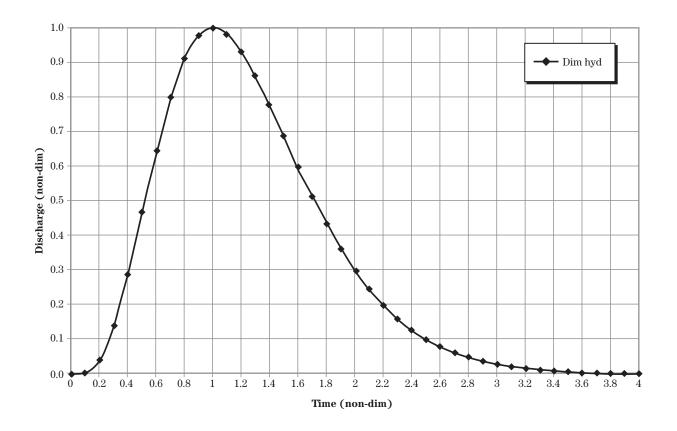


Table 16B-4 Peak rate factor = 450DIMENSIONLESS UNIT HYDROGRAPH: 0.0 0.011 0.0739 0.1975 0.3614 0.5371 0.7 0.8333 0.9282 0.9829 0.985 0.9447 0.8859 0.8151 1.0 0.7377 0.6581 0.5798 0.5051 0.4357 0.3725 0.3159 0.266 0.2224 0.1849 0.1528 0.1257 0.1029 0.0838 0.068 0.055 0.0443 0.0356 0.0285 0.0227 0.0181 0.0143 0.0114 0.009 0.0071 0.0056 0.0044 0.0034 0.0027 0.0021 0.0016 0.0013 0.001 0.0008 0.0006 0.0005 0.0004 0.0003 0.0002 0.0002

0.0001

0.0001

0.0

0.0001

Figure 16B-4 Dimensionless unit hydrograph — peak rate factor = 450

0.0001

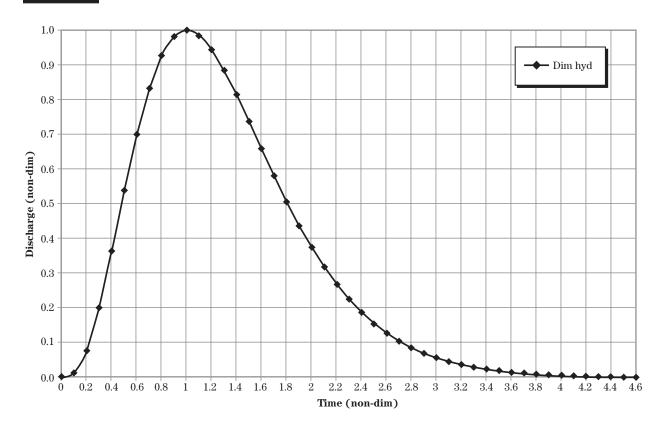


Table 16B–5 Peak rate factor = 400

0.0	0.027	0.1244	0.2732	0.4429
0.6081	0.7517	0.8642	0.9421	0.9863
1.0	0.988	0.9555	0.9076	0.8491
0.7839	0.7155	0.6465	0.579	0.5144
0.4538	0.3977	0.3465	0.3004	0.2591
0.2224	0.1902	0.162	0.1376	0.1164
0.0982	0.0826	0.0693	0.0579	0.0484
0.0403	0.0335	0.0278	0.023	0.019
0.0157	0.0129	0.0106	0.0087	0.0072
0.0059	0.0048	0.0039	0.0032	0.0026
0.0021	0.0017	0.0014	0.0011	0.0009
0.0007	0.0006	0.0005	0.0004	0.0003
0.0003	0.0002	0.0002	0.0001	0.0001
0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0	

 $\textbf{Figure 16B-5} \qquad \text{Dimensionless unit hydrograph} \ -- \ \text{peak rate factor} = 400$

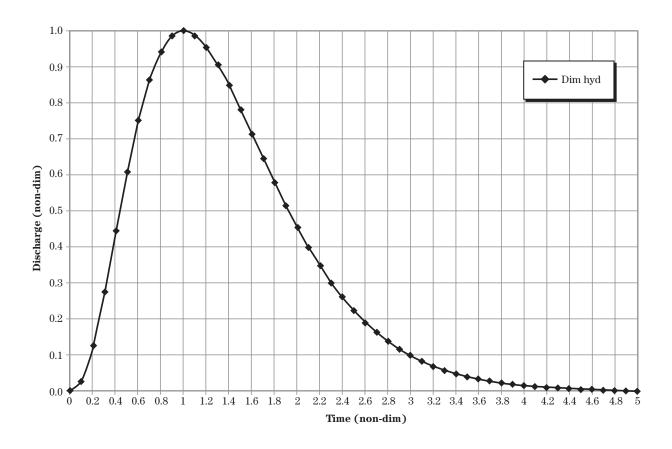


Table 16B–6 Peak rate factor = 350

DIMENSIONLESS UNIT HYDROGRAPH:

0.0	0.197	0.53	0.8006	0.9546
1.0	0.9651	0.8803	0.7703	0.6532
0.5402	0.4378	0.349	0.2743	0.2131
0.1638	0.1248	0.0944	0.0708	0.0529
0.0392	0.0289	0.0213	0.0156	0.0114
0.0082	0.006	0.0043	0.0031	0.0022
0.0016	0.0011	0.0008	0.0006	0.0004
0.0003	0.0002	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001
0.0001	0.0			

Figure 16B–6 Dimensionless unit hydrograph — peak rate factor = 350

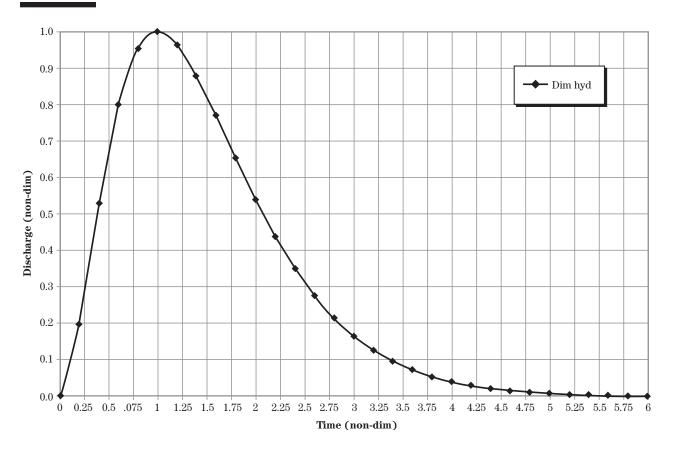


Table 16B-7 Peak Rate	Factor = 300				
DIMENSIONLESS UNIT	HYDROGRAPH: 0.0 1.0 0.629 0.2561 0.0873 0.027 0.0078 0.0022 0.0006	0.2943 0.9736 0.5369 0.2087 0.0695 0.0212 0.0061 0.0017 0.0005	0.6201 0.9085 0.4527 0.1691 0.0551 0.0166 0.0047 0.0013	0.8458 0.8217 0.3776 0.1363 0.0436 0.0129 0.0037 0.001	0.9656 0.7257 0.3122 0.1093 0.0343 0.0101 0.0028 0.0008
	0.0002	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001

Figure 16B-7 Dimensionless unit hydrograph — peak rate factor = 300

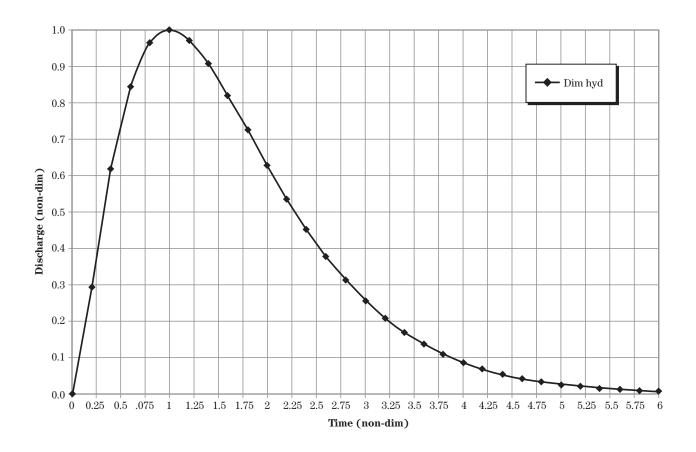


Table 16B-8 Peak rate factor = 250DIMENSIONLESS UNIT HYDROGRAPH: 0.0 0.4142 0.7086 0.8863 0.9751 1.0 0.9809 0.9332 0.868 0.7937 0.7159 0.6388 0.5648 0.4957 0.4322 0.3747 0.3233 0.2778 0.2378 0.2028 0.1725 0.1463 0.1238 0.1045 0.088 0.074 0.0621 0.0521 0.0436 0.0364 0.0304 0.0253 0.0211 0.0175 0.0146 0.0121 0.01 0.0083 0.0069 0.0057 0.0047 0.0039 0.0032 0.0027 0.0022 0.0018 0.0015 0.0012 0.001 0.0008 0.0007 0.0006 0.0005 0.0004 0.0003 0.0003 0.0002 0.0002 0.0001 0.0001 0.0001 0.0001 0.0001 0.0001 0.0

Figure 16B–8 Dimensionless unit hydrograph — peak rate factor = 250

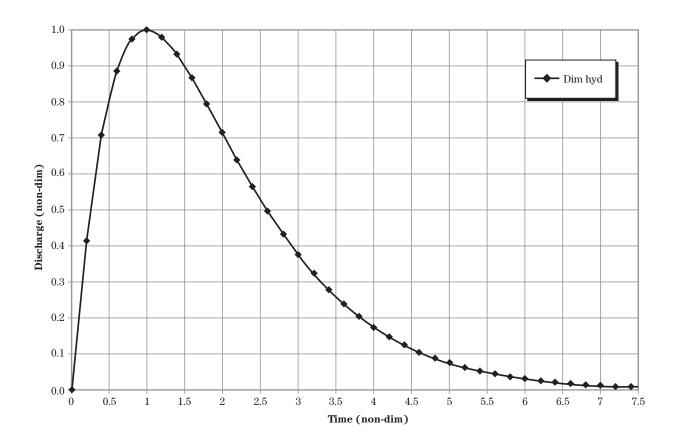


Table 16B-9Peak rate fa	actor = 200				
DIMENSIONLESS UNIT H	IYDROGRAPH:				
	0.0	0.5489	0.7911	0.9212	0.983
	1.0	0.987	0.954	0.9082	0.8545
	0.7966	0.7372	0.6779	0.6203	0.565
	0.5128	0.4638	0.4183	0.3763	0.3377
	0.3025	0.2704	0.2413	0.2151	0.1914
	0.1701	0.151	0.1339	0.1186	0.105
	0.0928	0.082	0.0724	0.0638	0.0563
	0.0496	0.0437	0.0384	0.0338	0.0297
	0.0261	0.0229	0.0201	0.0176	0.0155
	0.0136	0.0119	0.0104	0.0091	0.008
	0.007	0.0061	0.0054	0.0047	0.0041
	0.0036	0.0031	0.0027	0.0024	0.0021
	0.0018	0.0016	0.0014	0.0012	0.0011
	0.0009	0.0008	0.0007	0.0006	0.0005
	0.0005	0.0004	0.0004	0.0003	0.0003
	0.0002	0.0002	0.0002	0.0002	0.0001
	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001

0.0001

0.0

Figure 16B-9 Dimensionless unit hydrograph — peak rate factor = 200

0.0001

Chapter 16

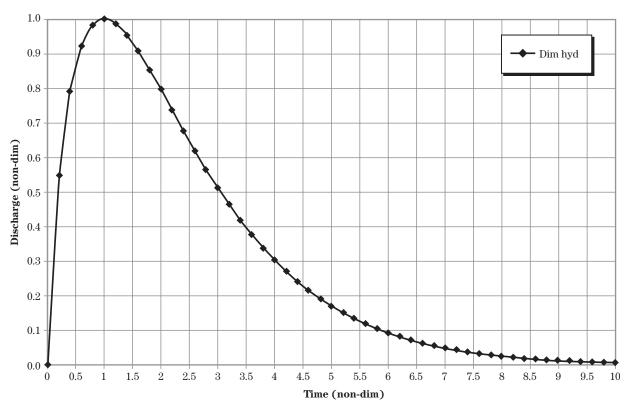


Table 16B–10 Peak rate factor = 150

DIMENSIONLESS UNIT HYDROGRAPH:

0.0	0.6869	0.8635	0.9499	0.9893
1.0	0.9918	0.971	0.9415	0.9062
0.8673	0.8262	0.784	0.7415	0.6994
0.6582	0.6181	0.5794	0.5422	0.5067
0.4729	0.4409	0.4106	0.382	0.3551
0.3298	0.3061	0.2839	0.2631	0.2438
0.2257	0.2088	0.1931	0.1786	0.165
0.1524	0.1407	0.1299	0.1199	0.1106
0.102	0.094	0.0866	0.0798	0.0735
0.0677	0.0623	0.0574	0.0528	0.0486
0.0447	0.0411	0.0378	0.0348	0.032
0.0294	0.027	0.0248	0.0228	0.0209
0.0192	0.0177	0.0162	0.0149	0.0137
0.0126	0.0115	0.0106	0.0097	0.0089
0.0082	0.0075	0.0069	0.0063	0.0058
0.0053	0.0049	0.0045	0.0041	0.0037
0.0034	0.0031	0.0029	0.0026	0.0024
0.0022	0.002	0.0019	0.0017	0.0016
0.0014	0.0013	0.0012	0.0011	0.001
0.0009	0.0008	0.0008	0.0007	0.0007
0.0006	0.0005	0.0005	0.0005	0.0004
0.0004	0.0004	0.0003	0.0003	0.0003
0.0002	0.0002	0.0002	0.0002	0.0002
0.0002	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001
0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001
0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0	

Figure 16B-10 Dimensionless unit hydrograph — peak rate factor = 150

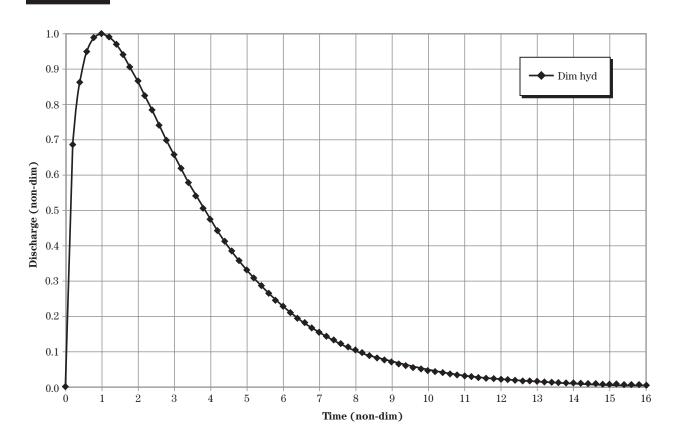


Table 16B-11 Peak rate factor = 100

DIMENSIONLESS	TIMIT	HADBOGB7bH.

IIIDROGRALII	•			
0.0	0.8142	0.9228	0.9722	0.9941
1.0	0.9955	0.984	0.9675	0.9475
0.925	0.9007	0.8753	0.849	0.8223
0.7954	0.7685	0.7417	0.7153	0.6893
0.6637	0.6387	0.6143	0.5905	0.5674
0.5449	0.5231	0.5019	0.4815	0.4618
0.4427	0.4243	0.4065	0.3894	0.3729
0.3571	0.3418	0.3272	0.3131	0.2996
0.2866	0.2741	0.2621	0.2506	0.2396
0.229	0.2189	0.2092	0.1999	0.191
0.1825	0.1743	0.1665	0.159	0.1519
0.145	0.1385	0.1322	0.1262	0.1205
0.115	0.1098	0.1048	0.1	0.0954
0.091	0.0869	0.0829	0.0791	0.0754
0.072	0.0686	0.0655	0.0624	0.0596
0.0568	0.0542	0.0517	0.0493	0.047
0.0448	0.0427	0.0407	0.0388	0.037
0.0353	0.0336	0.0321	0.0306	0.0291
0.0278	0.0265	0.0252	0.024	0.0229
0.0218	0.0208	0.0198	0.0189	0.018
0.0172	0.0164	0.0156	0.0148	0.0141
0.0135	0.0128	0.0122	0.0117	0.0111
0.0106	0.0101	0.0096	0.0091	0.0087
0.0083	0.0079	0.0075	0.0072	0.0068
0.0065	0.0062	0.0059	0.0056	0.0054
0.0051	0.0049	0.0046	0.0044	0.0042
0.004	0.0038	0.0036	0.0035	0.0033
0.0031	0.003	0.0028	0.0027	0.0026
0.0025	0.0023	0.0022	0.0021	0.002
0.0019	0.0018	0.0017	0.0017	0.0016
0.0015	0.0			

Figure 16B-11 Dimensionless unit hydrograph — peak rate factor = 100

